

The Poor Man's GUARDFIST

by Captain Todd A. Scattini

When I took over as my battalion's scout platoon leader in March 1998, I was fresh from the scout platoon leader's course (SPLC), and confident that my scouts would be proficient in the skills necessary to detect, disrupt, and destroy the enemy. At SPLC, I had been taught that indirect fire is the scout's main weapon. I had been told repeatedly that a scout with a map, compass, binoculars, and a radio could easily sway the outcome of a battle through the use of his reports and indirect fire.

The platoon leader before me had trained his men well. The platoon sergeant was exceptional, and the non-commissioned officers were all extremely skilled. However, after a few field exercises, I found a weakness in the training of individual soldiers. Most of them, but not all, had difficulty calling for and adjusting indirect fire, especially those straight from advanced individual training (AIT).

Recognizing the deficiency was the easy part, but effectively training and testing the skill with no ammunition or time allotted in the call for fire simulator (CFFS) was the true challenge. I needed a visual training aid that was simple to use and explain, yet inexpensive and easy to make. Investing a small amount of time and a little imagination, I created a tool that is effective, portable, and one that will remain in my "kit bag" for quite a while.

I took an 8½" x 11" sheet of clear plastic overlay material and used an office copier to print a binocular reticle onto it. When the binocular reticle overlay is placed over a sketch of a vehicle at long range, the effect is a simulated view as seen through binoculars.

It took about five minutes to create the "binos." I used PowerPoint to "draw" a binocular reticle that matched that of the M24 type binoculars used in my platoon. I printed that reticle out onto the overlay paper so that it was almost as large as the overlay (see diagram at right). On a second sheet of regular white paper, I sketched a target, a dug-in BMP or a T-80 in a wood line, for example. On this second sheet of paper, I draw the impact of rounds so that the soldier can adjust them.

I can use two different methods of execution, depending on the level of difficulty desired to train the soldier. Using one method, I require the soldier to prompt me for all information necessary to request and adjust fire. The soldier must ask for the location of the vehicle and the direction and distance to the target. By prompting me for information, the soldier demonstrates his understanding of all necessary data for the call for fire.

Using the second method, I brief the soldier on the location of and direction and distance to the target vehicle. When I want the soldier to request a polar fire mission, I brief him on his current grid location, as well. This does not have to be an exercise in map reading, unless that is part of your intent. As the trainer, I act as the fire support officer (FSO), so I ensure the soldier knows the call sign I will be using. Once the soldier has sufficient information to execute the call for fire, he performs the task using simulated radio transmissions. After the soldier sends the request for fire, to include the warning order, location, and description of the target, I provide the message to observer (MTO). For example, "MTO, Gunner, 1 round, HE, target number AL4006." Once the soldier correctly repeats the MTO, I send "shot" and "splash." Five seconds after "splash," I draw the impact of the round on the

white target sketch paper. The observer then places the "binos" back directly over the target vehicle and begins the adjustment process. The observer should be able to send the correct direction to target and left/right and add/drop adjustment. The soldier discerns the observer to target (OT) factor and direction to target based upon the information I previously gave him. I continue to draw subsequent rounds as the observer requests further adjustments.

Using this tool, you will be able to train soldiers to call for and adjust indirect fires using any one of the three methods: grid, polar plot, or shift from a known point. This tool is an easily understandable visual aid that can be transported anywhere. I often use this for opportunity training and rehearsals, and have found it to be infinitely useful — hopefully, you will, as well. SCOUTS OUT!

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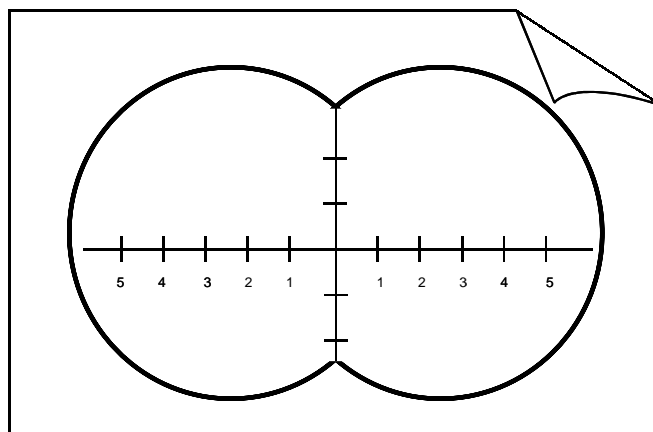


Fig. 1. This is the binocular reticle to print out onto a clear sheet of overlay paper.

Information I provide the observer once prompted:

Location of BMPs is NK861324

Distance to target: 2750m

Direction to target: 1700 mils

Observer location (optional): NK834322

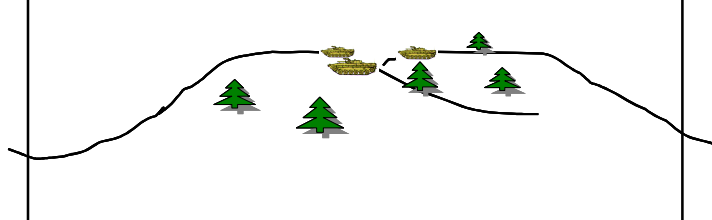


Fig. 2. This is an example of a sketch to represent enemy BMPs as observed from an OP to generate the call for fire.

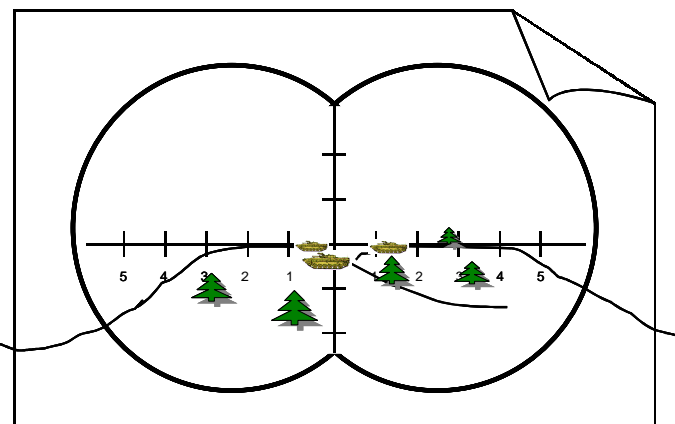


Fig. 3. This is the view the observer will have after placing the "binos" over the sketch of the enemy.

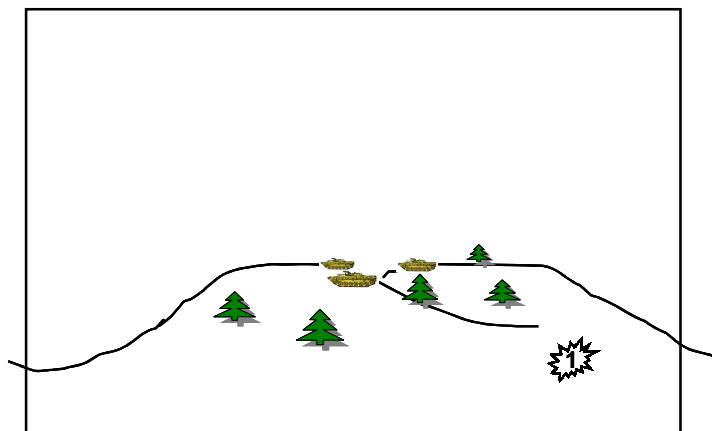


Fig. 4. After "splash" is given, draw the impact of the first round.

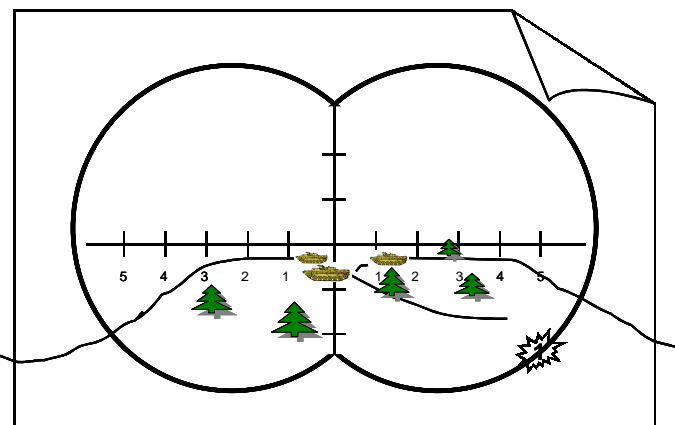


Fig. 5. Once the observer places the "binos" back over the target vehicles, he can see that the correction will be: "Direction 1700, left 150/add 400."

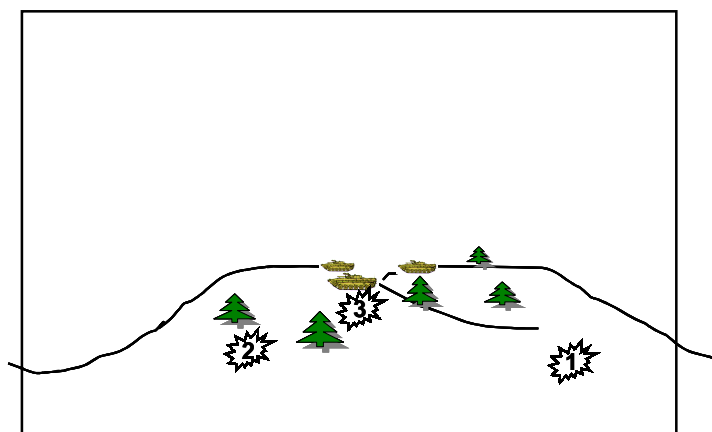


Fig. 6. Continue to draw the impact of subsequent rounds as they are adjusted. Once the criteria is met, the observer can request "fire for effect."

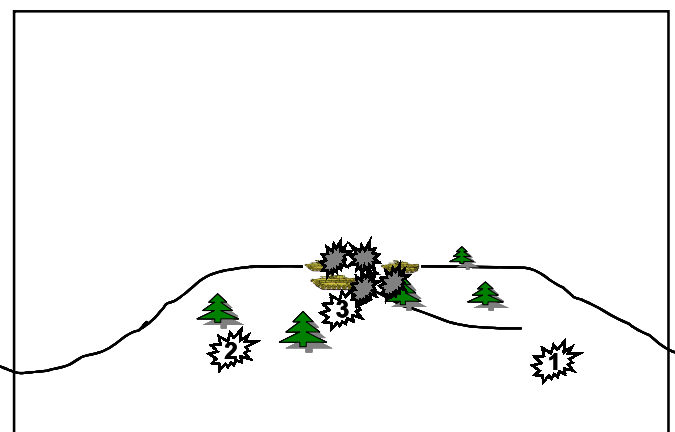


Fig. 7. After "fire for effect," draw the destruction or displacement of the target vehicles which should generate the end of mission and BDA report.

The PowerPoint file with larger graphics is available on our website at: www.knox.army.mil/armormag/ under the "Downloads" link.